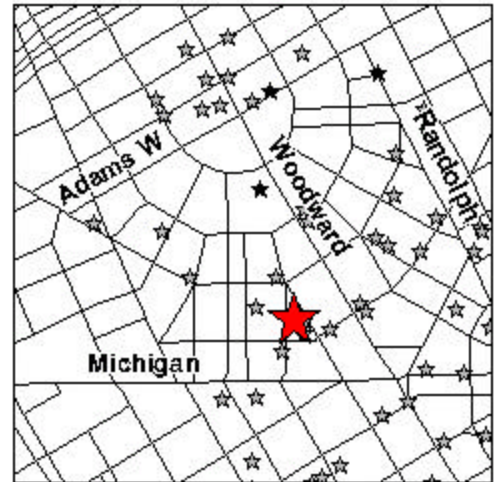


Capitol Park Historic District

General boundaries: Clifford Street, Woodward Avenue, Michigan Avenue, and Washington Boulevard.

Local
State
State Marker
National v 3/18/99



View of Capitol Park from Griswold looking northwest

Historic overview:

Early governmental, educational and commercial activity in the city of Detroit was centered in Capitol Park and its surrounding area. The first state capitol, first city high school, and a monument recognizing Michigan's first Governor, Stevens T. Mason's final resting place have prominently occupied the park. The Capitol Park Historic District represents Detroit's significant growing years throughout the nineteenth century. Designed by some of Detroit's most notable architects, most of the contributing buildings defining Capitol Park were built in the ensuing three decades, and illuminate the transformation of Detroit from a prospering late-nineteenth century commercial center to a modern age city building cathedrals of commerce.

After the fire of 1805, Judge Woodward was the central figure involved with the reestablishment of the town. Influenced by Major Pierre L'Enfant's plans for Washington, D.C., Judge Woodward envisioned a modern series of hexagons with major diagonal avenues centered on circular parks, or circuses, in the center of the hexagons. Only a fragment of the Woodward Plan was executed, but it resulted in the triangular public spaces of Capitol Park, Harmonie Park and Library Park. By 1823, Detroit's population increase influenced the decision by the US Congress to transfer the government of the Territory to the governor and legislative council. Thus, a court house building was created in Capitol Park between 1823-28. Detroit became the Capitol of Michigan after statehood was attained in 1837, and the building became the state capitol until 1847 when the seat of government was moved to Lansing. Next, the building became Capitol Union High School, until it was destroyed by fire in 1893. The land was converted into a park on February 20, 1893. In 1955 Capitol Park was redesigned with a comfort station and four bus loading shelters erected. The buildings that surround the park have historical commercial and business ties to Detroit as an industrial giant.

